(a) whether it is a fact that many applications seeking passport are pending with Regional Passport Office, Hyderabad;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) what is the usual time taken to get a passport after applying;

(d) what are the reasons for the delay; and

(e) what steps are being taken to reduce the delay?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) and (b) As on 16-7-1993 approximately 33,000 applications were pending with the Passport Office Hyderabad. Of these, about 14000 applications have been pending for over one month.

(c) Passport Office, Hyderabad takes approximately 2 months to issue a passport.

(d) and (e) Delays occur because of heavy workload and inadequate facilities including shortage of staff. The Government have taken a number of steps to expedite issue of passports which *interalia* include augmentation of the staff strength; stabilising the supply of passport booklets and streamlining procedures to increase productivity and reduce delays.

Fake Passport Racket Flourishing in Goa

1089. SHRI JOHN. F. FERNANDES: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of bogus Passport Racket flourishing in Goa, wherein many people from J & K and Punjab obtained their Passports on false resident certificates;

(b) if so, what is the number of such cases and what action has been taken; and

(c) what steps Government have taken to avoid such frauds in future?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI R. L. BHATIA): (a) and (b) While there exists the possibility that some non-Goans may seek to obtain passport from Passport Office, Goa on the basis of false certificates, only one case of a passport obtained with false documents has been conclusively detected by the Goa police authorities.

(c) If the Passport Office suspects that false certificates have been submitted further inquiries are conducted through the local authorities.

Appointment of High Commissioner for Human Rights

1090. SHRI SHANTI TYAGI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the issue of appointing a High Commissioner for Human Rights was raised at the World Human Rights Conference held in Vienna in June last; and

(b) if so the stand taken by the Indian delegation?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI SALMAN KHURSHEED) (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The Indian delegation stated that if any new machanisms are to be put in place, their role and their jurisdiction should be structured in a manner which should avoid duplication of responsibilities already entrusted to existing institutions. The role and jurisdiction of new entities, and any new arrangement should be non-intrusive and essentially aimed at the presentaion and application of human rights devoid of extraneous political factors. The World Conference on Human Rights has recommended to the General Assembly that when examining the report of the Conference at its 48th Session, it should give priority consideration to the question of the establishment of a High Commissioner for Human Rights.

Harassment to Indian Students in Ukraine

1091. SHRI SHANTI TYAGI: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that about 600 Indian students studying in various institutions in Ukraine had been adversely affected by a decree of Ukrainian Goverment permitting all foreign students including Indian students to continue their studies only on the basis of payment of fees in freely convertible currency;

(b) whether the Government of India has taken up the cause of Indian students; and

(c) if so, what is the response of the Goverment of Ukraine in this regard?